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IN MEMORIAM
Charles H. Buesching



CHARLES H. BUESCHING, head of this bank under a number of titles for the last forty years, the man at the middle of the head table, you know, just last week it was, made the annual reports, best reports we ever had, and the committee appointments, and most of the decisions (all the important ones) and a good many of the jokes, is having to be missing from this special meeting, even though it is all about himself and even though he was so full of life that it seems incredible that he should have died Thursday night last week at his very own dinner party. Remember he was just now saying he had finished working 55 years at the bank, "so if nobody else gives a party for me, I will have it myself."

No doubt about it, he enjoyed that last party. The people closest to him, especially his lovely

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daughter, also his best helpers and closest friends, and the people he worked with every day, many of whom he had "showed them how to do it," they were all there. The new President, whom he had timely personally chosen for that, was there to master the ceremonies and did it very well indeed. Then quite a few people, all different kinds, in their own individual words and ways, indicated the consentient good will, affection, popularity and respect that not only they but everybody else had for him: the same as they are all saying about him now, only he could hear it then, really loud and clear. Let not anybody suppose he didn't like that. And then as you recall he responded in substance that Mr. Foster had a pretty good bank and had treated him pretty well in it.

Well Mr. Foster did have a pretty good bank

and he did treat Charlie Buesching pretty well in it and let him have his way about building the Tower and all, just like Charlie said. Remember when some people used to call the Tower Building "Buesching's folly" that may "very well bust the bank." How about that now—for the man who "wrote the skyline." Anyhow there are several of us still around remembering that in 1933 both capital and footings had shrunk so low that we just about had to start over, so that in a very large sense it was Mr. Buesching who left a pretty good bank. But no such question is in issue here today, only the record left by Charlie Buesching for his own private stamp on this community.

Lest our own affectionate opinions might seem prejudiced in his favor, let us first view the community appraisal being expressed so very widely,

not only by all the men on the street but in the press by their most gifted writers. They seem to agree that Charlie was not only the head man in the bank but the head man in the city as well, our "Public Citizen Number One." That he contributed more to the progress and betterment of this city than anybody else. That he was a remarkable salesman of progressive products of all sorts. That he had a very extra dynamic energy, drive, and physical and mental power and prowess to get things done for the common good. That he was not only one of the top bankers in the state but a good deal farther than that and the opinion has been often expressed that he would have been a leading banker also in New York or Chicago. However this is the city he was dedicated to promote, and promote it he did all his waking hours.

They list all sorts of honors and awards deservedly accorded to him over the years not only in every phase of the city's civic affairs and in the development of many private corporations, but in banking circles generally, state and national. It is needless to say they looked up at him and said "Hello, Charlie, what can we do for you" in the office of the Comptroller of the Currency (as well as everywhere else). That he was sound, reliable, intelligent and honest, and lived a good, clean life besides. That he was a true extrovert who liked everybody and was immensely popular in return. Come to think of it, it was hard to make any real progress walking a block down the street with Charlie, so many people he had to stop to talk to, all friends of his too, and from all walks of life, whom you weren't interested in but he was! As

one friend said, "He was interested in everybody." That he has in short left the very clear stamp of his life and deeds all over the community. We will "let them say" all these things, and admit them to be true.

Of course, here at the bank we have other vivid memories of him of a far more personal sort. The planning he used to upbuild the bank, he called it "skull-practice," that much more often than not turned out very good. His own observations that having passed 70 years of life in good health "the world owed him nothing," "the rest was free," "how lucky could he get," so whatever happened he would not complain. And while he was no more immune from troubles than anybody else, he did never complain. His observations that he had been driven into being a fairly good banker

because it was so much better than being the unusually incompetent carpenter he started out to be. His business reports and letters became masterpieces of good, clear English diction, reflecting a superior education that he taught himself so well that he could refer to it in that last response with the priceless witticism that the "only reason he did not go to college was because he didn't go to high school—because about that time he got the migraines and was told he had to work outdoors." But, as if inherited, his interest in construction work never subsided, and in addition to the Lincoln Tower and its several branches and the annex uncompleted at his death, there are standing more than a few of Fort Wayne's finest institutional buildings for which the fund-raising efforts of "Drive-Captain" Buesching were

largely responsible. And it is very due him to at least mention here that these same drives he captained took no small amounts of his own money too.

We saw in him that very special aptitude to excel in whatever lines he elected to, which amounts to the will to succeed so strong in him that it precluded failure. Yet equally strong was his quality of tolerance, forgiving and forgetting all sorts of failures and shortcomings in everybody else. We watched with admiration those numerous loans he made to people on their face and faith instead of collateral to start or build up little businesses into big ones, for which he, by the way, expected and exacted strict moral integrity for repayment; and they, by the way, sometimes expressed real gratitude and sort of "loved him for it." We couldn't help but notice the special sort of old-

fashioned chivalry he so obviously felt toward both his wife and daughter. We noticed that remarkable courage he sometimes called "Dutch" with which he faced up to everything—I don't believe he was ever afraid of anything—if he was, he forgot to mention it. Neither was any job too big for him to tackle and the impossible ones just took a little longer. He couldn't stand seeing or reading bad loans on the books, so he charged them off "right now." And if and when those charge-offs "used up" the dividend money, then he had the simple practicality and the extra courage to "just omit the dividend."

And, of course, we couldn't help but notice all the time the special joy in living that the man had, liking every minute of it, taking equal fun in his work as well as his fishing, his golf, his card

games, his travel; just ordinary talking with people was fun for him! We saw also that amazing combination of courage and confidence that was perhaps his most outstanding trait. How and when in the Great Depression in the early Thirties and banks were failing all around, his had no troubles you could detect from either his walk or talk. When in later life, not too long ago, he smoked his way right through a throat malignancy to its complete cure. When, on account of a faulty signal light, the plane he was riding in to Toledo came in for what might have been but didn't turn out to be a crash landing at Cleveland. When, on his way home from Indianapolis on an icy winter night, the car he was driving went into a ditch and skidded to a stop on its side and he told his passengers he "had saved their lives."

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When, ordered to the hospital on occasion of his one earlier heart attack in the winter of 1957 delayed by his car stuck in the ice and snow, he pushed it out of the driveway to "get going to the hospital"! How on that same occasion, lying there in the hospital, he drew up an important issue for sale of bank stock and sold a block of it to his nurse! Oh, there is no doubt about it, people will still be talking about some of these things that Charlie Buesching said or did a good many years from now.

Well this is what this meeting was all about and therefore let us now resolve that the Board of Directors of "Lincoln National Bank and Trust Company of Fort Wayne," I mean "Charlie Buesching's bank"—anyhow it has his signature written all over it, does hereby acknowledge on

behalf both of himself and his family all these plaudits being so rightly and warmly bestowed upon him, and add to them these "private opinions of our own" with our unanimous affectionate deep esteem and regard to one of the truly best men we have been privileged to closely know; and thus sort of try to say "Goodbye to you Charlie, thanks very much for knowing you." And to put down these words, still falling short of adequately expressing our high regard for him, on the permanent records of this bank monumental of his life, with special copies provided for his very nice family. His three grandchildren he loved so well may want to read it about him when they grow up.

Done and dated at Fort Wayne, Indiana on Monday the 15th day of January, 1962. W. S. scripsit

